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DE RUEHBU #0652 1371258
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 161258Z MAY 08
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1053
RUCNMER/MERCOSUR COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS BUENOS AIRES 000652

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [AR](#)
SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: NESTOR KIRCHNER OFFICIALLY ASSUMES PJ
PRESIDENCY

REF: (A) BUENOS AIRES 0514 (B) BUENOS AIRES 0196 (C) BUENOS AIRES
0592

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Former President Nestor Kirchner (NK) assumed presidency of the Justicialist (Peronist) party (PJ) officially on May 14 at a rally in the province of Buenos Aires. The event began with several emphatic and hardline speeches from party officials. NK was expected to use the occasion to lash out at enemies, real and imagined, as is his wont. That didn't happen, however. His acceptance speech lasted less than a minute and only served to introduce his wife, President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner who delivered brief remarks widely interpreted as conciliatory toward the agricultural sector, prompting speculation that farmers would call another truce in their two-month old protest of tax increases on agricultural exports. End summary.

The PJ Comes Out Swinging

¶2. (SBU) Kirchner won the presidency of the Justicialist ("Peronist") Party after presenting his unchallenged slate for the leadership positions of the party on April 18 (ref A) but his party leadership was formalized at yesterday's rally. The first hard-hitting speeches at the rally were delivered by two of the PJ vice presidents, Governor of Chaco Province Jorge Capitanich and CGT labor leader Hugo Moyano. Moyano took a hard line, accusing striking farmers of "taking the truck drivers hostage." Moyano also harshly criticized the opposition, which met in Congress with rural sector leaders for the first time on May 14. Capitanich repeated Moyano's criticisms of the opposition and emphasized the importance of economic growth with wealth re-distribution. (Note: Capitanich has elevated his profile in recent days, and his name has even been mentioned as a possible replacement for beleaguered Cabinet Chief Alberto Fernandez.)

CFK Makes Nice

¶3. (SBU) At the podium NK, widely assumed to be the keynote speaker at his coronation ceremony, surprised the crowd and critics by ceding the floor to his wife, President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (CFK), presumably to counter growing speculation about his role in GOA decision-making. Although CFK delivered her speech in her customarily strident, hectoring tones, the speech lacked the harsh, confrontational content of other speeches and was significantly shorter, lasting a little more than 15 minutes. In her speech, CFK avoided any direct reference to the conflict with the rural sector and chose instead to emphasize a conciliatory message, convoking "all Argentines...to debate and discuss in a democratic framework."

Missing in Action

¶4. (U) All of the PJ governors attended the rally, with the exception of Cordoba Governor Juan Schiaretti, who has distanced himself from the government during the agricultural strikes. Other

notable absences included Senator and former Governor of Santa Fe Carlos Reutemann, former Entre Rios governor Jorge Busti, and Senator Juan Carlos Romero. Former Economy Minister and brief NK ally in the reconstruction of the PJ Roberto Lavagna also was not present.

Action on the Sidelines

¶ 15. (SBU) To make sure everything wasn't too peaceful, a fight broke out on the margins of the event between two groups of rival union members, one of which was tied to PJ vice-president and teamsters chief Moyano.

Comment

¶ 16. (SBU) The backdrop to NK's inauguration as PJ president was the government's ongoing crisis with the rural sector. Capitanich and Moyano delivered the hardline government speeches, allowing the Kirchners to be less confrontational, winning them some grudging plaudits for their relatively "conciliatory" tone. The rally nevertheless formally launched, per ref B, the rebirth of the PJ.
End comment.

WAYNE